

# **Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants**

## **PURPOSE**

Through the development of regional Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), local governments incorporate species conservation into local land use planning, which streamlines the project approval process and facilitates economic development. The Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants program provides funding to States to develop HCPs. Planning assistance grants may support planning activities such as document preparation, outreach, and baseline surveys and inventories. The funding for the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants is competed for at the National level.

The Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants program first received funding in fiscal year 2001 of \$6.635 million. Last year, the Service awarded grants to 24 out of 43 proposals to provide project funding in 14 States, with at least one proposal funded in each Service region. Almost \$11.7 million was requested in the 43 proposals submitted.

In fiscal year 2002, \$6,650,000 is available for Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for funding under the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance program, **a proposal must meet all of the mandatory conditions listed below**. If a proposal does not meet these conditions, do not submit a proposal for consideration.

1. A proposal must include 25 percent non-Federal cost share (decreases to 10 percent if 2 or more States or Territories are contributors to the proposal and its activities) as per section 6 of the ESA.
2. A proposal cannot include FWS FTE costs.
3. We do not intend to grant funding for projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements of the Act including complying with a biological opinion under section 7 of the Act or fulfilling commitments of a Habitat Conservation Plan under section 10 of the Act, or for projects that serve to satisfy other local, State, or Federal regulatory requirements (e.g., mitigation for local, State, or Federal permits).
4. For a proposal involving an ongoing project, evidence of progress made to date must be provided.

5. The proposal must involve a discrete activity(ies) (each activity included in the proposal must have an identified starting point and end point); for example, developing public outreach brochures, gathering baseline data for an HCP, or preparing a draft HCP or associated NEPA documents.

**ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE**

State administrative costs must either be assumed by the State or included in the proposal in accordance with Federal requirements.

**HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2002 EVALUATION FORM**

**FWS Regional Staff: Please fill out this form completely.**

May attach written explanations for the categories in this form and any additional information.

Region\_\_\_\_\_

State(s)\_\_\_\_\_

HCP name\_\_\_\_\_

Service contact for more information\_\_\_\_\_

Estimated total cost of proposal\_\_\_\_\_

% of cost to be shared by non-Federal entity (also list entities) \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of funding requested (total cost minus the non-Federal match) \_\_\_\_\_

Relative Regional priority for this proposal\_\_\_\_\_

Justification for Regional priority\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Total points available = 100 points.)

**SPECIES BENEFITS**

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the proposal will be to listed and unlisted species proposed to be covered by the HCP. A covered species is any species (listed or unlisted) that is proposed to be identified on the section 10(a)(1)(B) permit, thus receiving incidental take authorization.

Federally listed species are defined as those species listed as threatened or endangered by the Federal Government through section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. Unlisted species include candidate, proposed, State listed and all other species.

1) Planning efforts that will benefit more species will score higher. Listed and unlisted species that are proposed to be covered by the HCP can be considered.

*Score:* Number of species proposed to be covered by the HCP (provides more weight for including unlisted species) (15 pts maximum)

- \_\_\_ 1 species (1 pt)
- \_\_\_ 2-5 species (5 pts)
- \_\_\_ 6-10 species (10 pts)
- \_\_\_ 11+ species (15 pts)

2) Planning efforts for HCPs that will provide greater benefit to covered listed and unlisted species will score higher. The benefits to species will be considered **High** if, through the HCP planning effort, the majority of the species' range-wide habitat (75% or greater) or an essential piece of habitat will be protected, a major population necessary for recovery may be protected, or major threats to the species will be eliminated. The benefits to the listed species will be considered **Low** if, through the planning effort, only a small percentage of the species' range-wide habitat is considered (20% or less), etc.

*Score:* Amount of benefit the HCP will potentially provide to species proposed to be covered. (This factor should be scored based on benefits to the individual species as opposed to the aggregate. To score 15 points, the applicant must document that the HCP will potentially result in a major benefit to at least one species.) (15 pts maximum)

- \_\_\_ Low benefit to conservation (5 pts)
- \_\_\_ Medium benefit to conservation (10 pts)
- \_\_\_ High benefit to conservation (15 pts)

*Justification:*

**Total points for species benefits (sum of 1-2):** \_\_\_\_\_

## ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the proposed HCP will be for the covered listed and unlisted species.

3) Lands that require little or no management to provide benefits for covered species will score higher in this evaluation factor. This habitat can include occupied or suitable, unoccupied habitat. The level of management expected to be necessary is based on an evaluation of the biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes. Biotic factors include the structure and composition of plant and animal communities. Abiotic factors include soil, hydrology, natural topography, and salinity gradients. Ecological processes include succession, trophic energy flows, and disturbance regimes.

*Score:* When considered in the context of the surrounding landscape, the HCP plan area contains\_\_\_\_\_ of the naturally occurring biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes necessary to maintain a fully functioning ecosystem that contains the habitat necessary to support the covered species and other non-covered species associated with that ecosystem. (15 pts maximum)

- \_\_\_\_\_None (0 point)
- \_\_\_\_\_Some/Most (8 points)
- \_\_\_\_\_All (15 points)

*Justification:*

4) Plan areas for developing HCPs that cover a large area are more likely to consider landscape-level or ecosystem-level planning issues. This type of regional planning benefits numerous species within an ecosystem while streamlining ESA compliance for the smaller landowners within the planning area.

*Score:* Size of plan area to be covered by the HCP (provides more weight for large plan areas) (15 pts maximum)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 0-100 acres (1 pt)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 101-1,000 acres (5 pts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1,001-10,000 acres (10 pts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10,001+ acres (15 pts)

**Total points for ecosystem benefits (sum of 3-4): \_\_\_\_\_**

## **FOSTERING HCP PARTNERSHIPS**

The purpose of this section is to emphasize the importance of involving stakeholders in the development of the HCP. This section includes consideration of the number of partners and the amount of cost share contributions.

5) Proposals with a larger number of stakeholders involved in the development of the HCP will score higher. Stakeholders are public or private entities that will play a significant role in the development of the HCP, that is, entities that participate on the HCP steering committee or that will make a contribution in the scoping for, and preparation of, the HCP. Consultants or consulting firms who are preparing the HCP should not be counted.

*Score:* Number of stakeholders involved in the development of the HCP. (20 pts maximum)

- ☐ 1-5 stakeholders (5 pts)
- ☐ 6-10 stakeholders (10 pts)
- ☐ Greater than 10 stakeholders (20 pts)

*Justification:*

6) Commitment to the successful development of a HCP can be evidenced by cost share contributions. Cost share is the percent of the total project cost that will be provided by non-Federal partners. Proposals that include a greater than minimum cost share contribution will be ranked higher. When both the State and local governments are involved, cost sharing by both governments is generally preferred.

*Score:* Percentage of cost share provided by non-Federal partners. (12 pts maximum)

- ☐ Minimum 25% (or 10% where two or more States are involved, or 0% for identified Insular Areas) (0 pts)
- ☐ Each additional 5% (2 pts)

**Total points for HCP partnerships (sum of 5-6): \_\_\_\_\_**

## **DELIVERY OR COMPLETION**

This section is to recognize proposals that will result in the initiation or completion of planning activities.

7) Proposals to initiate planning for a new HCP or to complete an HCP already under development will score higher.

*Score:* Initiation or completion of the planning process. (4 pts maximum)

- ☐ Is instrumental in initiating a planning process (4 pt)
- ☐ Finalizes a planning process (4 pts)

*Justification:*

8) Each activity included in the proposal must have an identified starting point and end point. For example, developing public outreach brochures, gathering baseline data for an HCP, or preparation of the draft HCP. Discrete activity(ies) which can be completed within one year, as opposed to the completion of the entire HCP over multiple years, will score higher. (4 pts maximum)

- \_\_\_ The activity(ies) for which funding is requested cannot be completed within 1 year (0 pts)
- \_\_\_ The activity(ies) for which funding is requested can be completed within 1 year (4 pts)

*Justification:*

**Total points for Delivery (sum of 7-8):** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS PROPOSAL (sum of 1-8 above):** \_\_\_\_\_